

DG Works Employability Partnership Open Call for Parent Employability Innovation Fund

2026-2027



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1 Introduction

The Parent Employability Innovation Fund is designed to assist parents who are unemployed and economically inactive to progress towards and securing employment and parents on low incomes to progress or improve their circumstances in employment. This initiative acknowledges that, in order to equip local residents with the skills and confidence sought by employers, collaborative efforts at a local level are essential to deliver high-quality services to those most in need.

This approach is guided by the Scottish Government's Employability Strategic Plan [No One Left Behind](#), which sets the strategic direction for government-funded employability services.

For 2026/27, the Parent Employability Innovation Fund will focus on parents who are unemployed or on low incomes – locally referred to as Child Poverty – and aims to increase household income through employment as part of broader efforts to reduce child poverty.

Funding of up to £10,000 per project is available.

2 Outcomes and principles

The **Parent Employability Innovation Fund** is designed to achieve the following key outcomes:

- Reduction of child poverty by supporting parents, particularly those within the [six priority family groups](#) to increase household income through employment. This must include support for out of work parents as well as support for parents who are in low-income employment.
- Support for unemployed parents of all ages to overcome barriers to entering the labour market
- Improved health and wellbeing for parents with long-term health conditions, mental health challenges, or disabilities, enabling progression towards employment
- Delivery of sector specific training to prepare parents for roles in industries with high demand for skilled workers
- Contribute to the reduction of child poverty by supporting parents to overcome transport barriers that prevent them from entering, sustaining, or progressing in work.

The delivery of all provision supported through the Parent Employability Innovation Fund will be underpinned by the *No One Left Behind* principles:

- Dignity, respect, fairness, equality, and continuous improvement.
- Provision of flexible, person-centred support.
- Services that are straightforward and easy to navigate.
- Integration and alignment with other relevant services.
- Clear pathways into sustainable and fair employment.
- Evidence-driven approaches informed by data and lived experience.

- Support enabling individuals to secure the right job at the right time.

In addition, all funded provision must adhere to the following requirements to ensure effective support and sustainable outcomes:

- Services must be configured around participant needs rather than provider structures
- Consideration of “travel to work” options to address physical and perceived barriers, facilitating access to opportunities beyond local areas
- Incorporation of lived experience into service design and delivery, in line with the Scottish approach to service design
- Full consideration of the needs of individuals with protected characteristics.
- Provision should offer additionality to existing services where permissible, and create progression routes into Further/Higher Education, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships, and other relevant opportunities, alongside access to employment
- Participation must not jeopardise benefit eligibility or result in a reduction of overall household income

Projects are not expected to achieve an immediate employment outcome for every participant; however, there must be a clear and credible progression route.

Applicants should be able to demonstrate:

Starting point → Intervention → Change → Next Step

3 What types of provision are we looking for?

Focus Areas

Applicants should ensure their proposals support parents and particularly the six priority family types identified as being at the greatest risk of poverty while also considering the needs of local employers to support successful and sustained outcomes for participants aligned to local labour market demands.

Focusing on concentrated areas of child poverty, the highest numbers are in:

- **Stranraer:** 380 children living in low-income families after housing costs across Stranraer East, West and South. This is 25% of all children aged 0-15.
- **Annan:** 294 children across Annan East and West. This is 20% of all children.
- **Lochside and Lincluden:** 279 children across Lochside and Lincluden. This is 23% of all children.

Flexibility and Innovation

The fund is designed to allow providers to bring forward their own ideas and approaches. Applicants are invited to propose new services and interventions that:

- Address barriers to employment for priority groups
- Respond to employer needs and labour market demand

- Demonstrate sustainability and potential for long-term impact
- Proposals should demonstrate how they will contribute to closing gaps in current service provision and respond to identified local challenges

We want to understand what you are testing or developing, why you believe it could work and what can be learned from it.

The Fund will not support the continuation of existing funded activity without a clear additional or innovative element.

Expectations

The LEP encourages applicants to:

- Utilise their expertise, local knowledge, and partnership networks to design creative and innovative solutions
- Submit proposals that are evidence-based, reflecting clear demand and alignment with local priorities
- Develop services that complement existing provision and add measurable value to the employability landscape

Although there is a specific focus on the six priority family groups below, our service eligibility also recognises different family structures and applications may also make the case to support wider family groups to tackle child poverty through increasing income from employment. This will include parents who are in-work and on a low income.

- Lone parent families
- Families with a mother aged under 25 years
- Minority ethnic families
- Larger families (3 or more children)
- Families where the youngest child is under 1 year
- Families with a disabled child or adult

Your project should fit within the 5-stage employability pathway illustrated below; however, funding is primarily intended for programmes that deliver outcomes at **Stages 3 - 5**, helping **parents** move into education, training and work and to sustain and progress in work.

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Referral, Engagement and Assessment	Needs Assessment	Vocational Activity	Employer engagement and job matching	In work support and aftercare
Reaching out to individuals, supporting people into regular activity and positive routines and helping them to connect with others	Assessing the initial needs of clients and agreeing key activities to be undertaken with them in order to address any barriers to employment or training	Delivering a range of accredited training, employability training for core skills, job search advice and activities to raise awareness of enterprise and entrepreneurship in order to meet the needs of individuals.	Activities such as arranging work or volunteer placements with employer, assisting individuals to secure job vacancies and matching job-ready clients to jobs.	Activities include supporting individuals to maintain and progress within the workplace.
End to end continuous case management / Key Worker support				

The employability services and provision should be:

- appropriate for the age and stage of the target participant group;
- based on need and proportionate to evidenced numbers;
- delivered locally in facilities that are accessible to all;
- in line with current and future labour markets, skills requirements, and job vacancies; and
- must not duplicate existing provision

4 Application process and decision making

Delivery Timescales/Key Milestones

The Parent Employability Innovation Fund will provide funding for delivery of services during this financial year ending **31st March 2027**.

Milestone	Date
Open call for applications	Monday 7 th September 2026
Questions deadline	Monday 14 th September 2026
Application deadline	Monday 21 st September 2026
Shortlisted Applications Pitch to LEP Panel (Estimated)	Thursday 24 th September 2026
Estimated award letters issued by	Wednesday 30 th September 2026

Providers can offer services throughout this period or for certain periods only (according to anticipated demand). Providers can make multiple applications if they wish to provide more than one project. This information document and the application form is available online and applicants can access a recorded presentation providing an overview of the funding guidance from DGEmployability@dumgal.gov.uk. Any further questions can be directed to the same DG Employability [inbox](#) until 5pm on Monday 14th September 2026.

Who is Eligible to Apply?

Third, public and private sector organisations are eligible to apply. If you are applying as a partnership, the lead partner should apply and must provide details of all partners involved. The lead partner would be responsible for the overall management and delivery of the project including budget management and monitoring and reporting requirements.

Stage 1 – Eligibility Check

All applications will initially be reviewed against the Fund's eligibility requirements. All application requirements must be met before an application can progress to the next stage.

- The project is specifically for parents
- Funding requested does not exceed £10,000
- Project can be delivered and expenditure completed by 31st March 2027
- Project has a clear employability purpose and primarily supports progression through Stages 3-5

- Proposed activity is additional and is not already funded through an existing funding agreement
- Where the applicant currently receives LEP funding, existing monitoring and reporting requirements are being met
- Proposal does not seek duplicate funding or duplicate outcomes already funded through another agreement.

Stage 2 – Pitch to LEP Members

Applicants whose applications meet the criteria above, will be invited to a short pitch and discussion with members of the Local Employability Partnership.

This provides applicants an opportunity to discuss their project and allows Members to explore aspects of the proposal before making a funding recommendation. Further information on the format will be provided to shortlisted applicants. Applicants will not be required to prepare a lengthy formal presentation.

Being invited to pitch does not constitute an offer of funding.

What Makes a Good Application?

- Observe the word limit for each question
- Please write succinctly and in plain English. Use short sentences and avoid acronyms and jargon. There is no need to use formal or flowery language. What is key to a good application is being as specific as you can and assuming the reader knows nothing about your organisation, track record and project even if you have received local funding before doing similar.
- Ideally you will provide a clear picture for the reader of what you intend to deliver, how you will do this, and what difference it will make to participants as well as how it contributes to the programme strategic outcomes
- Please consider the NOLB principles when designing your project and when describing/evidencing this in the application
- Please provide and evidence a strong rationale to show both the need for the services and that there will be demand from local people to take part in the provision

Identifying, recruiting, and sustaining engagement of the number of participants stated is the responsibility of the organisation receiving funding.

Eligible Spend

- Only direct delivery costs are eligible fund expenditure
- Management and administration costs are eligible at up to 10% of total award

Decision Making

Membership of the panel will be drawn from strategic partner organisations represented on the Dumfries and Galloway Local Employability and Skills Partnership including:

- Dumfries & Galloway Council – Education Services
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

- Skills Development Scotland (SDS)
- NHS Dumfries & Galloway
- Dumfries and Galloway College
- Scotland's Rural College
- South of Scotland Enterprise
- Developing Young Workforce Regional Group
- Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway
- Criminal/Community Justice Partnership
- SWESTRANS (Regional Transport Partnership)
- Dumfries and Galloway Council - Employability, Skills & Partnerships

It is our intention to involve parents in recommendations on which project they believe would meet their needs.

Each application will be pre-screened for eligibility by the council's employability team before being presented to the LEP members for scoring and moderation. Panel members will be required to declare any conflict of interest which will be registered, and appropriate action taken e.g. a panel member submitting a proposal will not be involved in the assessment of their proposal.

Notification of Successful Applications

Application outcomes, including award letters are estimated to be issued from 21st August 2026. This date is indicative and may be subject to change depending on the assessment and approval process. Successful applicants will receive confirmation of their award and details of the next steps.

5 Payment process

Public Sector Funding dictates that payments are required to be accounted for in the financial year of delivery.

Applicants will be required to submit quarterly claims, or more frequently, as appropriate. All claims will be checked, and evidence will be requested as appropriate. Payments will be processed through Dumfries and Galloway Council's normal accounting system and payment to applicants will be by BACS.

Prior to final claims being paid, a monitoring visit may be made to projects. The monitoring visit will be made by an Officer from Dumfries and Galloway Council. This visit will check that the project has been implemented as described, that financial records associated with the project are in order, and that publicity arrangements and equality and sustainability policies have been complied with.

Where monitoring identifies that a project is not making sufficient progress towards its agreed outputs and targets, this will be discussed with the applicant to understand any

challenges and consider any appropriate actions. This may include changes to future funding.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress in achieving the objectives of your innovation project will be measured in line with the Shared Measurement Framework for Employability as follows:

- The number of individuals engaging in employability support and training, broken down into age groups, parental status, and protected characteristics
- The progression of individuals towards education, training, or employment
- The number of individuals taking part in employment opportunities supported by employability funding
- The number of individuals achieving positive outcomes
- The number of parents achieving in-work progression
- You can propose your own measures

In the event that you are unable to move a participant into a positive outcome at the end of your project, you must endeavour to refer participants to other training / employability provision.

Shared Measurement Framework

Participants registration and progress will be collected on a quarterly basis using the Scottish Government's Shared Measurement Framework which collects a range of data and reflects the No One Left Behind strategy.

This will involve the quarterly submission of detailed data along with financial claims. This information is collected in an excel format and information on the collection of this will be provided as part of the offer to successful applicants. In addition, a case study is requested each quarter.

6 Data collection and reporting requirements

Successful applicants will be expected to record all personal and service-related information for participants on the programme. This will be discussed and agreed with successful applicants at an inception meeting where more information will be made available to successful applicants, and training will be provided where required.

Programme activity and performance reports will be provided to Dumfries and Galloway Council on a monthly basis and progress against the performance profile will then be reported to the Local Employability and Skills Partnership.

Applicants will be offered information and support to register on the DGLEP Flexible Framework for procurement in order to be able to hear about future opportunities.

7 Key information and data sources to help applicants

- **Unemployment and Claimant figures for Dumfries and Galloway**
 - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lad/1778385216/report.aspx>
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- **Priority Area data - SIMD** SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation)
- **Dumfries and Galloway Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2023 to 2033**
- **South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy**
- **Annual Participation Measure - Annual Participation Measure - Skills Development Scotland** <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/annual-participation>
- **Regional Skills Assessments - Regional Skills Assessments**
 - [rsa-college-region-report-dumfries-and-galloway.pdf](#)
- **Protected Characteristics - Protected characteristics | acas**